

grades. We must build new schools, modernize existing ones, and expand public school choice by strengthening Federal support for charter schools. We must bring computers, communications technology, and the latest educational software into the classroom so that every American student is technologically literate and can take advantage of today's information revolution.

My Administration is also committed to making our schools safe and orderly places where teachers can teach and children can learn. With the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, we have supported schools and communities that offer antitruancy, curfew, school uniform, and dress code policies. We have strictly enforced the policy of zero tolerance for guns. Last year alone, more than 6,000 students had guns taken from them and were sent home. This month, we will begin distributing a guide—*Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*—to help all schools prevent violence before it starts. At my direction, the Secretary of Education and the Attorney General developed this guide to help school officials recognize and respond to the early signs of student violence. Later this fall, we will hold the first ever White House Conference on School Safety to develop effective strategies to keep our schools safe, disciplined, and drug-free.

My Administration also supports legislative initiatives that encourage literacy and learning at every age—from expanding the Head Start program for preschoolers to providing trained reading tutors to elementary school children to offering college aid for low-income students. We are working with the Congress to fund the Administration's proposal to strengthen teacher training programs and provide scholarships to 35,000 well-prepared teachers who commit to teaching in underserved urban or rural schools.

The quality of America's educational system will determine the shape of our children's future and the success of our Nation. As America's students go back to school this year, let us renew our commitment to ensuring that the doors of every classroom open onto a future bright with possibility for every child.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,
President of the United States of America,

by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 6 through September 12, 1998, as a time when America Goes Back to School. I encourage parents, schools, community and State leaders, businesses, civic and religious organizations, and the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities expressing support for high academic standards and meaningful involvement in schools and colleges and the students and families they serve.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this ninth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on September 14.

Remarks at a Florida Democratic Party Dinner in Coral Gables, Florida

September 9, 1998

Thank you very much. My good friend, Buddy MacKay—I've had a wonderful time with Buddy and Anne today, and I think we did a little good in Orlando. And I certainly hope we're doing some good tonight. I want to thank Daryl Jones for being here and for what he said, for being my friend, for being willing to serve this country and go through a highly political process. It's a long road that doesn't turn, and yours is going to turn in the right direction, friend, for a long time to come.

I want to thank all the legislators and others who are here. I'd like to say a special word of thanks to Congressman Peter Deutsch, who came down with me from Washington, and is going home tonight, so he's not going to get a lot of sleep. Thank you for being here.

I want to thank Mitch Ceasar for being with me today, and all the Democratic officials. And I would like to recognize our nominee for State comptroller, Newall Daughtrey. Thank you for being here, Newall, and good luck to you.

You know, I was sitting here listening to Daryl speak and then listening to Buddy speak, and I thought of that old saw: The last speaker at the banquet said, everything that needs to be said has been said, but not everyone has yet said it. *[Laughter]* And I thought of just standing up and saying, "Amen," and sitting down. *[Laughter]*

This has been a very moving day for me because of what Buddy MacKay said here and in Orlando, because of the children we saw today in Orlando, and many of the things they said to me as I was greeting them. All of you know that I've been on a rather painful journey these last few weeks. And I've had to ask for things that I was more in the habit of giving in my life than asking for, in terms of understanding and forgiveness. But it's also given me the chance to try to ask, as all of us do: What do you really care about; what do you want to think about in your last hours on this Earth; what really matters?

I've tried to do a good job taking care of this country, even when I hadn't taken such good care of myself and my family, my obligations. I hope that you and others I have injured will forgive me for the mistakes I've made. But the most important thing is, you must not let it deter you from meeting your responsibilities as citizens.

There is always, at a moment like this, those who seek not to deal with the substance of whatever is at issue but those who seek some advantage and hope that the attention of the public will be diverted from the public's business. And these next 8 weeks ought to be devoted to you and your children and your grandchildren and the future of this country and the future of this State.

I've known Buddy MacKay for nearly 20 years, and I know he's got a tough race. I know he's been at a financial disadvantage. Now that he's stuck up for me, he may be at some sort of a political disadvantage, although I'm kind of an old-school guy, I think—they asked me why I went to Russia the other day, and I said, "Well, heck, any-

body can go to Russia when times are good. I want them to be our friends, and I think we ought to build a future together."

And I'm proud to be here with him. I can tell you this—I'll tell you something that I don't believe there is a person in this room that would dispute. You may not know for sure how this Governor's race is going to turn out, but there is not a person here who doesn't believe that if he wins the governorship, even people who don't vote for him will be proud of the fact that he's the Governor of Florida, and that he'd get reelected in a walk. Now, you all know that, don't you? You all know that, don't you? *[Applause]* If you believe that—and you did or you wouldn't have stood up—then you owe it not to Buddy and Anne but to yourselves, not to wake up on the morning after the election thinking about what might have been. He is a good man and a good leader.

And you know, one of the things that I always get a big hand at when I go through the litany of all the things that have changed in America, and I say we've got the lowest unemployment rate in 27 years, and the lowest crime rate in 25 years, and the smallest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years, and we're about to have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, and we did it with the smallest Federal Government in 35 years, and people say, "Yeah, yeah."

You know what that means? That means that it's more important who's Governor now than it was the day I became President. That's what that means. It means that experience, which is easily dismissed by people who don't understand exactly what State government does in good economic times—I used to tell people—because most of the time when I was Governor, we were going through that terrible recession of the eighties in the middle of the country, so sometimes I'd feel a little bit of self pity, and I'd say, "Shoot, if I had a good economy, I could have a lobotomy and be successful as Governor." *[Laughter]* And that was sort of a way of saying that maybe people didn't know exactly what was going on.

But it's not true. If you care about the education of your children, there's no single elected official that can have a bigger, positive impact than the Governor. If you want

to see Florida continue to prosper economically but you really care about preserving the environment in a way that's fair to everybody, it matters that the Federal Government can help save the Everglades and do some other things. Sure, it matters. But it really matters who is the Governor.

If you're not sure that the Congress will ever do the right thing and pass the Patients' Bill of Rights, with 160 million people already in HMO's and millions more coming; and you like the fact that health costs ought to be managed and kept within inflation just as long as people aren't losing quality care; but you don't think somebody who is in an accident ought to be hauled halfway across town to an emergency room if there is one four blocks down the way, and they might die on the way; and you don't believe that people ought to be told they can't have a specialist if they have to have surgery that could leave them marked for life if they don't have a specialist; and you don't think that an employee of a small business who happens to be pregnant should lose her obstetrician halfway through the pregnancy because the small business changes health care plans; and you don't believe that anybody ought to have access to your medical records because you think you ought to have some rights to privacy: then it really does matter who the Governor is.

And none of those rights can be written into law and mean anything unless somebody has a way of enforcing them. It matters whether he wins the Governor's race for the health care and the peace of mind of working families in this State. So these stakes are high. This is not some casual deal here.

You clapped when he talked about the gun show loophole for background checks. Let me just tell you, since we passed the Brady bill, 250,000 people—250,000 people—since 1993 have been denied the right to get a handgun because they had a criminal record. That's hundreds a day. I can't really—you know, you could work out the math, but anyway, it's a whole bunch of people every day. How many people—I'm trying to get out of being too—they say I'm too much of a wonk, I'm trying to forget the numbers, and all that. [Laughter] How many people are living today because that thing was passed? How

many lives might be saved? It might be worth it to elect him Governor just to save one child's life. It matters who's the Governor.

Now, the same thing is true about these elections coming up in 2 months for Congress. What is the subject? What's it going to be about? What do you think it ought to be about? Do you believe that because America is doing real well now, it really doesn't matter what it's about? Do you think—most of us in this room, I guess, are pretty ardent Democrats—do you think it really matters that in all off-year elections the electorate is smaller, and the people that tend to drop off are good, hard-working people who are struggling to keep body and soul together? And I'm not sure that it matters as much when there's not a Presidential election whether they go vote—the kind of people we try to represent, the kind of people like the people that put this food on our tables tonight. And if it does matter, what are you going to do to get them there? I think it really matters.

You know, on October 1st—I am counting the days—on October 1st, we're going to have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years. And already—I'm kind of like a kid waiting for Christmas; it's like a present—and already I've got people who want to spend the money. They're going to say, "Well, we're going to have this estimated surplus for now to kingdom come, so let's have a tax cut right now."

And I'm not against the right kind of tax cut. We have tax cuts in our budget for child care, for education, for environmental investment in our budget right now. But they're all paid for, and they don't get into the surplus for a very good reason. We know right now that we cannot sustain two of the most important programs in America and very important to Florida, Social Security and Medicare, when the baby boomers retire, unless we make some changes in it. Because when all of us baby boomers retire—and I'm the oldest of the baby boomers; the people between 34 and 52 are the baby boom generation—when we all retire, at present birth rates, immigration rates, and work force participation rates, there will only be about two

people working for every person drawing Social Security. And that's never happened before. And it will be that way for about 20 years, until all the kids that are now in school get out and they start working, because they're the first group that's bigger than we are. Then the numbers will start getting better again.

Now, during that period if we don't make some changes now, one of two things is going to happen: We'll have to have a huge slash in the way the programs are run, thus imperiling the stability of old age for people who, unlike me, won't have a good pension and a decent income; or, we will just come up with the money at that time to keep the same program going in exactly the same way, which will lower the standard of living of our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren. And no baby boomer I know wants that to happen.

Now we finally have the money to deal with that. And even though it's election season, I think the right thing to say to the American people is, "We're not against tax cuts. We need new spending programs. We need to spend more on education than I have proposed. We need to do a lot of things, and a lot of people could use a tax cut. But it is wrong to do this until we have saved Social Security and lifted that burden off our children, and made sure that elderly people 20 years from now are going to have the same level of security they do today." Let's look at the big, long-term problems of America. That's what this ought to be doing.

But you see—let me give you another issue that directly affects not only those of you in this room who could pay to come to this fundraiser tonight but the people who put the food on our table. It may seem esoteric. And that is whether we continue to lead the world toward global prosperity and deal with all these international economic problems.

Ninety-one percent of the American people, I saw in a poll today in something I read today, know that the stock market dropped a lot last week, and I hope they know it came up a lot yesterday. But when you read—if you're somebody out there and you pick up the paper and you read why the stock market dropped so much in 2 or 3 days, and you say, "I don't know that there are a lot of busi-

nesses going broke," and everybody says it because of events elsewhere in the world, we can't be just an island of prosperity; we have to want others in the world to do well if we want America to keep doing well.

We have responsibilities. And a part of my budget involves paying our fair share to these international institutions to restore growth to places that are trying to take care of themselves and doing the right thing and trying to be responsible. And it's important to the economy of Florida and the United States.

The third thing we've got to do is try to prevail upon the Congress to follow the lead that Buddy's trying to take in passing a national bill for patients' rights.

The fourth thing we have to do is to help you with your education program. How many schools in Florida have kids going to class in house trailers? That's why I have proposed, for the first time ever, that the National Government have a program to help build or remodel 5,000 schools in the fast-growing areas or in the areas where the schools are too dilapidated to really do the right thing by the children. That's why I proposed in our balanced budget providing funds for the States to hire 100,000 teachers to make sure we get the class sizes down to 18 in the early grades all across America.

These are big issues. In our balanced budget we also have money to continue to clean up the lakes and rivers of this country. Forty percent of the lakes and rivers in this country are still too polluted to swim in almost 30 years after the passage of the Clean Air Act—the Clean Water Act in the EPA. And that's why I'm hoping this week, we will finally get the Senate to stop filibustering and actually pass campaign finance reform, so we can follow Florida's lead, and we can have the right kind of system where everybody has a chance to run. Now, these are big issues.

A lot of people say, "Well, why go vote? America is in good shape." The world is changing very fast, and we are very blessed. But to be worthy of our blessings, we have to use them in the proper way. And when these good times are here, we need to use our money; we need to use the emotional space we've got; we need to use the confidence we've got to deal with the big issues.

So I say to you, I'm glad you're here. I appreciate the money that you've spent to contribute to the party. It will be well used to get votes out on election day. But every one of you as a citizen can go out and talk to your friends and neighbors and co-workers and people you see in every building you go in of any kind and tell them what the stakes are, why they should vote for Buddy MacKay for Congress, why they should vote at all—for Governor, why they should vote at all.

I'm so sick and tired of—all the experts say, "Well, they know the vote will be down." The vote won't be down if people think it's in their interest to show up if they think it's in their interest to show up.

And I'm telling you, our country has never had a better opportunity to build a world for the 21st century that's safer and more prosperous for our children. But it will only happen if we don't snooze away these good times, if we plan and act for the future.

The last thing I want to say is, when you go home tonight, think about the children that are the face and future of Florida and our country, increasingly diverse, from different racial and ethnic and religious and cultural backgrounds, all coming here because they believe there's some fabulous, unique promise and hope in our country. Before you go to bed tonight just ask yourself: Who do you really believe is more likely to go to bed every night as Governor thinking about those kids? Who do you think is more likely to wake up every day thinking about those kids? And who do you think is more likely to make decisions, the popular decisions and the unpopular decisions, that will give those kids a chance to grow up in one America?

That's why people ought to vote in November. That's why they ought to vote for Buddy MacKay. And that's why they ought to support our agenda for America's future. You can make sure it happens, and I hope you will.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 p.m. in the Granada Ballroom at the Biltmore Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to gubernatorial candidate Lt. Gov. Buddy MacKay of Florida, and his wife, Anne; Daryl Jones, State senator; and Mitch Caesar, chair, Florida Democratic Party.

Remarks on Presentation of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Math, and Engineering Mentoring

September 10, 1998

Thank you very much. I saw Representative Brown take my speech off the podium—[laughter]—and I thought that that was a rather extreme measure to take to demonstrate that he still knows much more about this subject than I do. [Laughter]

Let me thank all of you for coming and congratulate the awardees. I thank Secretary Slater and Secretary Riley for their support of this endeavor. I want to thank Neal Lane for agreeing to become the President's Science Adviser; and Dr. Rita Colwell for heading the NSF. When they were clapping for her, I didn't realize that she was sort of the poster woman of achievement for women in science. [Laughter] But I couldn't think of a better one.

I would like to say one very serious thing about George Brown. Many jokes have been made over the years about my affinity for issues that don't exactly grip the public consciousness from morning until night every day, but I think the public is more interested in science and technology than ever before and understands more clearly its role than ever before. And I believe it's important to acknowledge that in the last generation, the Member of Congress most responsible for our doing everything we've done right has been George Brown of California. And I thank you for that.

Let me say, I'm quite well aware that we're starting a little late today, and I regret that, but I was in an extended meeting with Senators from my own party, part of this process I'm going through of talking to people with whom I work and with whom I must work in your behalf to ask for their understanding, their forgiveness, and their commitment, not to let the events of the moment in Washington deter us from doing the people's work here and building the future of this country. And I can't think of a better moment really or subject for us to make that larger point.

All of you know how rapidly the world is changing. Now, everyday citizens see it when they watch the gyrations of the stock market